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Margaret Roberts THATCHER **UNITED KINGDOM**

Prime Minister (since May 1979)

Addressed as: Prime Minister

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Conservative Party leader since 1975, Margaret Thatcher dominates British politics. In June 1987 her party won another overwhelming majority in the House of Commons, ushering in her third consecutive term. In January 1988 she became this century's longest serving British prime minister, and she has publicly said that she looks forward to a fourth term (her current one ends in 1992). she rules her Cabinet with an iron hand and, in the words of one media observer, verbally "bashes" colleagues whose ideas run counter to hers. Her command of the political landscape has also undercut her opposition in Parliament and bolstered the Tories already strong position in opinion polls.

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Thatcher considers any willingness to compromise to be weakness and views herself as the West's strongest, most politically secure leader. Although she has often expressed her faith in US leadership in foreign affairs, she has said that she considers herself better positioned than officials in Washington to consolidate the West's relations with Moscow. She regards her government's tenure and policy continuity as strengths that enable her to handle an increasingly sophisticated Soviet challenge. Her respectful yet forthright relationship with Soviet Communist Party General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev also bolsters her view that she has a special understanding of Moscow and its evolving policy agenda. Even so, when the Prime Minister disagrees with Washington on security policy issues, preserve a strong public image of Alliance unity.

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Thatcher has given no hint of slowing down or resting on her laurels. She is looking forward to 1989 with eagerness and a touch of apprehension. She will celebrate the new year as the West's most tenured and experienced leader—strengths that she is likely to capitalize on to exert greater influence on the course of key foreign policy issues. At the same time, she has expressed concern about the departure of President Reagan, whose leadership she has considered central to maintaining a strong NATO Alliance through the 1980s and to preserving a close US-UK special relationship. In addition, despite her good relationship with Gorbachev and praise for his reform efforts, Thatcher remains the West's leading voice counseling caution in NATO's response to Soviet security policy initiatives and Gorbachev's foreign policy in general. Accordingly, during the next year we expect her to step up her warnings to other Allied leaders—especially those in Bonn and Washington—against being enticed into dropping their guard concerning Moscow. Thatcher also fears a lull in East-West arms control efforts while the new US administration settles in, and she will probably try to nudge Washington officials in her preferred direction on disarmament issues. We expect her to push during 1989 for cuts in conventional and US-Soviet strategic systems

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while avoiding reductions in short-range nuclear weapons. Despite her intentions, we believe that Thatcher's desire to exert greater influence on Alliance matters could lead to increased tensions among Western leaders; those leaders are likely to resent further pressure or admonitions from London on policy matters. (b)(3)

On the Home Front

To further alter Britain's economic and social fabric along her self-described "radical" lines, Thatcher has outlined an aggressive legislative agenda for her third administration. She has publicly vowed to continue expanding the enterprise culture and eliminating socialism in Britain. Accordingly, her government has implemented measures to lower taxes, expand private ownership of homes and stocks, and further restrict trade unions and Labor-dominated local governments. Despite her commanding position, however, Thatcher is not without problems, and her armor has already suffered some dents. For example, popular concern over her government's reform, funding, and administration of the National Health Service (b)(1) (b)(3) the "most sacred cow" of the welfare state) has forced her to hike social spending and initiate a Cabinet-level review of the NHS to forestall further erosion of public confidence in her handling of health care issues. (b)(3)

Foreign Policy Views

Concerned about the long-term implications of expanded Franco-German defense cooperation, Thatcher has publicly urged the two countries to reduce the intensity of their bilateral relationship. She suspects that Paris may be trying to forge a European defense regime that would exclude the United States; accordingly, she has said that greater defense cooperation between France and West Germany must be strictly within a NATO context and avoid alienating opinion in the United States. (b)(1) (b)(3)

Concerning the EC, Thatcher is intrigued with the Community's decision to establish a barrier-free internal market by 1992. Determined that British firms should do well by the internal market plan, she will try to exert a strong influence on how that policy is implemented and will resist any measures she believes might impair British economic activity or industrial competitiveness. Although Thatcher is willing to grant the EC some additional decisionmaking authority, she is strongly nationalistic and controlling and will resist any measures that erode national sovereignty. As she has said in numerous recent public statements, she wants to see the EC remain a pragmatic economic union of independent states free from strong socialist influences. We expect her to resist some aspects of the new EC internal market plan, which will anger nearly every other Community leader and add to her image in continental capitals of being only halfhearted in her commitment to the Community. (b)(3)

Personal Data

Thatcher was born on 13 October 1925. She has degrees in chemistry and law from Oxford. She has served in Parliament since 1959. She is widely known as a scathing debater, hard worker, and fast learner who has little patience for bureaucratic delay. Her poise, charm, and feminine manner when out of the spotlight, however, contrast sharply with her

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public image. Thatcher is a devoted wife to her husband, Denis, a retired oil executive. She has two children. In 1984 she narrowly escaped an assassination attempt by the Provisional Irish Republican Army

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27 October 1988

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